

# Partners Against Adult Abuse



## A Reporting Guide For Mandatory Reporters



*Washington State*  
Department of Social  
& Health Services

**A**buse of vulnerable adults happens more often than any of us would like to admit. It is serious, and it can happen in any setting.

All of us, as responsible citizens, must help to prevent and stop abuse, neglect, abandonment, and financial exploitation of vulnerable adults by reporting suspected abuse to the appropriate authorities. Some professionals are required by law to report suspected abuse.

### **Are you required to report abuse of an adult?**

**If you are a . . .**

- DSHS employee
- Law enforcement officer
- Employee of a social service, mental health, or welfare agency
- Employee of home care, hospice, home health, adult day care, adult day health agency
- Owner or employee of a nursing home, boarding home, or adult family home
- School personnel
- Health care provider subject to Title 18 RCW (such as a nurse or doctor)

**. . . you must report.**

**You must report immediately if you have reasonable cause to believe that a vulnerable adult is being harmed. You do not need proof of that harm. People mandated to report must report suspected physical and sexual assault to both law enforcement and DSHS.**

**A vulnerable adult is:**

- someone over the age of 60 who is unable to care for or protect him or her self, or
- an adult living in a nursing home, boarding home, or adult family home, or
- an adult with a developmental disability, or
- an adult with a legal guardian, or
- an adult receiving personal care services in his or her own home from an agency or contracted individual provider, including self-directed care.

A legal reference for abuse of vulnerable adults is in Chapter 74.34, RCW.

This brochure is available in several languages and in alternate format. Call 1-800-422-3263.

It is the policy of the Department of Social and Health Services that no person, because of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, creed, or disability, shall be discriminated against in any aspect of program activities.

For more information,  
go to our Website at  
**[www.aasa.dshs.wa.gov](http://www.aasa.dshs.wa.gov)**

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This brochure is available in other languages. Visit the AASA web site at [www.aasa.dshs.wa.gov](http://www.aasa.dshs.wa.gov).

If you would like copies of this document in an alternate format – large print, Braille, cassette tape, or on computer disk – please contact Christine Parke, P.O. Box 45600, Olympia, WA 98504-5600, 1-800-422-3263, TTY 1-800-737-7931.

**Abuse is a willful action or inaction that causes harm. It includes physical, mental, and sexual abuse (including non-consensual contact or consensual contact with a caregiver).**

**Signs of physical abuse:**

- unexplained bruises, welts, black eyes, wounds, or fractures;
- multiple injuries in various stages of healing;
- sudden changes in behavior (adult is fearful or depressed or engages in self-destructive behavior);
- the caregiver refuses to allow visitors;
- person is in restraints or locked in a room;
- missing patches of hair or hemorrhaging below the scalp;
- client reports abuse.

**Signs of mental abuse:**

- person is emotionally upset, agitated, withdrawn, non-communicative, depressed, or nonresponsive;
- caregiver refuses to allow visitors or does not let the person participate in family or community events;
- client reports abuse.

**Signs of sexual abuse:**

- bruising around breasts and/or genital area;
- an unexplained venereal disease;
- soiled underclothes or bedding;
- client reports being sexually abused;
- sudden change in behavior.

**Abandonment is leaving the vulnerable adult without means of caring for self.**

**Signs of abandonment:**

- adult is deserted in a public place or in his or her own home;
- the adult reports being abandoned.

**Neglect is the failure of someone to safely care for a vulnerable adult to maintain health and safety. Self-neglect is the failure of the vulnerable adult to maintain his or her own health and safety.**

**Signs of neglect and self-neglect:**

- dehydration;
- malnutrition;
- untreated injuries, or unattended health problems, including poor dental health;
- person appears unclean and/or poorly groomed;
- person lying in feces or urine, or a strong odor of feces or urine;
- death of a person with indications of poor care;
- unsafe living conditions.

**Financial exploitation occurs when someone takes financial advantage of a vulnerable adult.**

**Signs of financial exploitation:**

- sudden transfer of assets (money);
- disappearance of possessions;
- unexplained or unusual use of bank cards;
- unpaid bills;
- forged signature on checks;
- overcharge for home repairs or other work;
- misuse of electronic benefits transfer card;
- adult is forced to sign a legal document;
- signs of telephone or mail soliciting (magazines, prize items).

# Reporting

If you think someone may be in danger or needs urgent help, call 911 or your local law enforcement immediately.

## When you report, you will be asked:

- The name, address, apartment number, age, and telephone number of the adult you think is being harmed.
- Any information about the circumstances.
- The name, address, relationship and telephone number of the person you think is causing the harm.
- Names of other people who can provide information about the situation.
- Any safety concerns you may have.
- Your name and address.

## Important to know

- People who report in good faith have immunity from liability.
- The reporter can request that their name remain confidential (except in a judicial proceeding).
- Client information is confidential (public disclosure regulations may apply).
- **The vulnerable adult will be interviewed in private.**
- **The vulnerable adult must consent to services and be informed of the right to refuse or withdraw from services. DSHS cannot remove an adult from their residence or place an adult in a different residence against their wishes.**
- DSHS will report a suspected crime to law enforcement.
- Any protective services will be provided in the least restrictive environment available and appropriate to the vulnerable adult.

### Where do you report?

If the person you think is being abused lives in a nursing home, a boarding home (including assisted living facilities), or an adult family home, call the DSHS Aging and Adult Services Administration Complaint Resolution Unit.

The toll-free number is

**1-800-562-6078.**

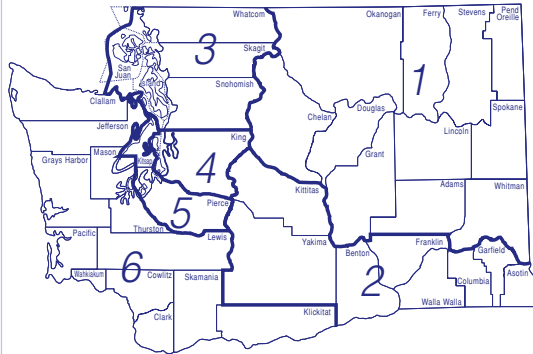
If the person you think is being abused lives somewhere else, contact your local DSHS AASA Home and Community Services (HCS) Office. You can find the number in the phone book under “Government Pages - Washington State”. Or you can call the Regional Offices listed on the back.

If you can’t find the number, call the toll-free hotline

**1-800-422-3263**

to get the number of your local HCS office.





## AASA Home and Community Services Regional Offices

### Region 1

Spokane, Grant, Okanogan, Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Lincoln, Ferry,  
Stevens, Whitman, and Pend Oreille Counties

**1-800-459-0421**

### Region 2

Yakima, Kittitas, Benton, Franklin, Walla Walla, Columbia, Garfield,  
and Asotin Counties

**1-800-822-2097**

### Region 3

Snohomish, Skagit, Island, San Juan, and Whatcom Counties

**1-800-487-0416**

### Region 4

King County

**1-800-346-9257**

### Region 5

Pierce and Kitsap Counties

**1-800-442-5129**

### Region 6

Thurston, Mason, Lewis, Clallam, Jefferson, Grays Harbor, Pacific,  
Wahkiakum, Cowlitz, Skamania, Klickitat, and Clark Counties

**1-800-462-4957**



Aging &  
Adult Services  
Administration